PECQUEUR · MALFIN · SCHELLE

Golden City

13. AMBER

SERIE B

DELCOURT

Golden City

13. AMBER

Story
Daniel PECQUEUR

Art
Nicolas MALFIN

Color
Pierre SCHELLE

LONESTAR

DELCOURT

COME ON, SPEED UP! WE'RE GOING TO MISS THE START OF THE BROADCAST!

OH, YOU'RE SUDDENLY INTERESTED IN POLITICS?

NOT POLITICS, HARRISON!

GET A MOVE ON, IT'S ABOUT TO START!

HEY! YOU KNOW, YOU COULD HELP ME GET THE FISH OFF THE BOAT!

NO TIME!

WE'LL FIND OUT THE NAME OF THE GOLDEN CITY'S NEW MAYOR IN JUST A FEW MINUTES!

ALTHOUGH WE DON'T HAVE ANY OFFICIAL INFORMATION AT THIS TIME, WE CAN ALREADY TELL YOU THAT THE TURNOUT FOR THIS ELECTION WAS OUTSTANDING, WITH NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTERS CASTING THEIR BALLOT! WHICH JUST GOES TO SHOW HOW IMPORTANT THIS ELECTION IS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOLDEN CITY.

HELLO THERE, ALEXANDER! YOU ARE NOW IN THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE OUTGOING MAYOR DAVID MILLER. I'M SURE HIS SUPPORTERS CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE RESULTS OF THIS ELECTION!

YES!

A LARGE CROWD TURNED UP TO SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR THEIR CANDIDATE. THE ATMOSPHERE IS BUZZING WITH EXCITEMENT. THE ARRIVAL OF DAVID MILLER IS EXPECTED AT ANY MOMENT.

Votez MILLER

HAS HARRISON BANKS ARRIVED AT HIS HQ, SARAH?

YES, HE LOCKED HIMSELF IN THE OFFICE WITH HIS CLOSEST ADVISERS.

HERE ARE THE RESULTS! THEY ARE NOW APPEARING ON TV SCREENS ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Harrison BANKS

David MILLER

69 %

31 %

BANKS CLAIMS A CONVINCING VICTORY WITH THE MAJORITY OF THE VOTES! HE IS THE NEW MAYOR OF GOLDEN CITY FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

WOOHOO! HE WON! HE WON!

WE NEED TO CELEBRATE! I KEEP A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE IN THE FRIDGE, JUST IN CASE!

MAYOR OR NOT, IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE. THE RICH WILL CONTINUE TO BECOME RICHER, WHILE THE POOR WILL CONTINUE TO GET POORER.

DON'T BE SO SURE! REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID DURING HIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN. HE SAID HE'D PUT AN END TO THE WEALTH GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR.

THE WHOLE THING IS JUST A BUNCH OF BULL. POLITICIANS NEVER KEEP THEIR PROMISES!

LET'S HOPE BANKS IS AN EXCEPTION! HERE'S A TOAST TO HIS SUCCESS!

CHEERS!

CONGRATULATIONS, HARRISON!

GREAT JOB!

HOORAY FOR BANKS!

I'D LIKE TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO EVERYONE WHO VOTED FOR ME. I HAVE MADE A PROMISE DURING MY CAMPAIGN THAT I WILL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO BRING PEACE TO THE WORLD. ALL OF US HERE ARE VERY WEALTHY. WE SHOULD HELP THOSE IN GREATEST NEED, AND USE OUR MONEY TO ERASE INEQUALITY.

THIS IS NOT A PLEA FOR GENEROSITY, BUT RATHER FOR COMMON SENSE. IT'S IN EVERYONE'S INTEREST. FOR AS LONG AS POVERTY EXISTS, PEOPLE WILL CONTINUE TO RIOT, AND THE UPRISING WILL EVENTUALLY SWEEP ACROSS ALL COUNTRIES, BRINGING ABOUT THE COLLAPSE OF THE WORLD ECONOMY.

WHICH WOULD HAVE A CATASTROPHIC EFFECT ON OUR EARTH'S RESOURCES AND, SOONER OR LATER, BRING US ALL TO OUR KNEES!

2

GATE 231

STOP
POLICE
SECUTITY
CONTROL

ID CONTROL.
PLEASE LOOK INTO THIS UNIT.

WHY? THE GOLDEN CITY POLICE KNOWS WHO I AM. THIS ISN'T MY FIRST TIME HERE!

IT'S THE NEW SECURITY REGULATIONS. MY JOB IS TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE FOLLOWED.

ALRIGHT, YOU CAN COME IN.

231

RD 33-567

HI, JOHN!

HEY! WHAT'S WITH THE TIGHTENED SECURITY?

IT'S BECAUSE OF THE FIRE THAT DESTROYED PART OF THE CITY.* THE INVESTIGATION IS STILL ONGOING. THE COPS ARE AFRAID IT COULD BE A TERRORIST ATTACK. IN RESPONSE, OUR LEADERS DECIDED TO IMPLEMENT THE "ANTI-TERRORISM" PLAN.

3

* SEE VOLUME 12.

GOOD DAY, SISTER LEA. I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU. MR. BANKS HAS REQUESTED THAT I ESCORT YOU TO HIS APARTMENT.

GATE 113-134

IS HE THERE RIGHT NOW?

NO, HE'S STILL AT THE HEAD-QUARTERS. I'M SO HAPPY HE WAS ELECTED MAYOR!

DID YOU VOTE FOR HIM?

ABSOLUTELY, AND SO DID MY FRIENDS! WE'RE ALL OBSESSED WITH HIM!

BANKS, AS THE NEXT MAYOR, WILL BE APPOINTING THE TWELVE ELDERS THAT WILL TAKE OVER FROM US. WHO DO YOU THINK HE'LL CHOOSE?

HIS MOST TRUSTED FRIENDS. HE WILL HAVE COMPLETE POWER AND WILL BE ABLE TO RUN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT, CARRYING OUT WHATEVER POLICIES HE WANTS.

AND WE WON'T HAVE ANY SAY IN THE MATTER!

♫

PLEASE EXCUSE ME, I HAVE A PHONE CALL.

HELLO, MR. MILLER.

GREETINGS, OLGA. WHERE ARE YOU?

MOSCOW. I'M STILL WORKING ON THE INVESTIGATION YOU ASKED ME TO CARRY OUT. I'VE UNCOVERED AN OPPORTUNITY TO TARNISH BANKS' STERLING REPUTATION AND STIR UP PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST HIM.

PLEASE EXPLAIN. WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT EXACTLY?

A BOMBSHELL IF THE GENERAL PUBLIC FINDS OUT ABOUT IT!

4

I'M SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, I WAS HELD UP AT MY HQ!

SO, HOW SHOULD I ADDRESS YOU NOW? HARRISON OR MR. MAYOR?

CALL ME GOLDY, LIKE WHEN WE WERE KIDS.

YOU GAVE ME THAT NICKNAME BECAUSE I MADE YOU A MINIATURE GOLDEN CITY OUT OF A PIECE OF WOOD. DO YOU REMEMBER?

I DO.

WHAT CAN I OFFER YOU? BEER, COKE, FRUIT JUICE? I GOT APPLE, ORANGE AND GRAPE.

GRAPE.

HOW ARE YOU? STILL IN PAIN FROM THE INJURIES?

NO. I HAVE TO GO THROUGH PHYSICAL THERAPY, BUT I'M FEELING MUCH BETTER. I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME STAY WITH YOU DURING MY RECOVERY.

?!

YOU'VE HELD ON TO IT ALL THIS TIME?!

I NEVER GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT IT. I ALWAYS CARRY IT IN MY POCKET. IT'S THE BEST GIFT ANYONE'S EVER GIVEN ME.

5

YOU WERE IN LOVE WITH ME WHEN I GAVE IT TO YOU.

I STILL AM.

YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?

NOT AT ALL, I'M SERIOUS. I USED TO DREAM OF MARRYING YOU WHEN I WAS YOUNG. BUT THEN SOMEONE TOLD ME I COULDN'T.

WHO?!

I CAN'T TELL YOU.

OH NO, YOU'VE EITHER SAID TOO MUCH OR NOT ENOUGH. IT'S TIME YOU EXPLAIN WHAT'S GOING ON. I WANTED TO MARRY YOU TOO, SO WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME? I'D LIKE TO KNOW THE TRUTH. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

YOU AND YOUR MOTHER CAME TO SPEND THE HOLIDAY AT YOUR CHATEAU NEAR THE VILLAGE WHERE I LIVED, LIKE YOU DID EVERY YEAR. I ALWAYS LOOKED FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN IN THE SUMMER.

YOUR MOTHER DIDN'T LIKE THAT. AND ONE DAY...

HELLO, LEA. WHERE ARE YOU COMING FROM?

THE MARKET.

IT'S RAINING, YOU'LL GET SOAKED. GET IN, WE'LL TAKE YOU HOME.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MRS. BANKS.

YEAH, WHAT ABOUT?

DON'T MENTION IT, IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO. BESIDES, THE MOMENT IS PERFECT BECAUSE I'VE BEEN MEANING TO SPEAK WITH YOU.

YOUR FATHER. I'VE HEARD THAT HE'S SICK, AND YOU DON'T HAVE THE MONEY TO COVER THE COST OF THE EXPENSIVE DRUGS HE NEEDS. IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT THOSE VERY SAME DRUGS ARE MANUFACTURED IN ONE OF MY LABORATORIES.

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SO HERE'S MY OFFER: I WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH THESE DRUGS FREE OF CHARGE IF YOU PROMISE TO BREAK UP WITH MY SON IMMEDIATELY AND NEVER SEE HIM AGAIN.

PLEASE, MA'AM, DON'T ASK ME THAT. I LOVE HIM SO MUCH!

STOP TRYING TO MAKE ME FEEL SORRY FOR YOU. YOUR FATHER'S LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS. UNLESS HE GETS THESE DRUGS, HE'LL DIE.

I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE. I ACCEPTED, AS PAINFUL AS IT WAS. YOUR MOTHER PERSONALLY DICTATED THE LETTER I SENT YOU THAT DAY, EXPLAINING THAT I WAS LEAVING YOU.

I STILL REMEMBER THAT LETTER. I READ IT SO MANY TIMES THAT I KNOW IT BY HEART. ALTHOUGH MY MOTHER TOLD ME NOT TO, I TRIED TO SEE YOU AGAIN. BUT IT WAS USELESS. I SENT YOU SEVERAL TEXT MESSAGES TO WHICH YOU NEVER REPLIED.

I WAS HEARTBROKEN THAT I COULDN'T SEE YOU ANY-MORE. SO, ONCE MY VACA-TION WAS OVER, I WENT TO VISIT YOUR PARENTS BEFORE HEADING BACK TO GOLDEN CITY. I WANTED TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU BROKE UP WITH ME.

I'D LIKE TO SEE LEA, PLEASE.

SHE'S NOT HERE.

OH? WHERE IS SHE?

AT THE CONVENT.

SHE WANTS TO BECOME A NUN. SHE JUST MADE THAT DECISION OUT OF THE BLUE. HER FATHER AND I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT WHAT POSSESSED HER TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT. SHE REFUSED TO ANSWER ANY OF OUR QUESTIONS.

I NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHAT COULD POSSIBLY LEAD YOU TO MAKE SUCH A DECISION!

I PROMISED YOUR MOTHER I'D BREAK UP WITH YOU. BUT I WAS DYING TO SEE YOU AGAIN. SO, TO KEEP MY PROMISE, I CAME TO THE REALIZATION THAT I HAD TO PUT UP AN IMPENETRABLE WALL BETWEEN YOU AND ME: THE CONVENT.

YOU'VE NEVER MENTIONED ANY OF THIS TO ME BEFORE. WHY DID YOU WAIT SO LONG?

YOUR MOTHER MADE ME SWEAR I'D NEVER TELL YOU THE TRUTH. SHE'S GONE NOW, SO IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE.

SHE'S NOT ACTUALLY DEAD. EVERYONE THINKS SHE DIED IN A PLANE CRASH, BUT THAT'S NOT TRUE. SHE'S LIVING UNDER THE RADAR ON A YACHT. SHE'S CHANGED HER NAME. NOW SHE GOES BY GWYNETH PALMER*.

HELLO, I HAVE AN APPOINT-MENT WITH MRS. PALMER.

YES, SHE TOLD ME. SHE'S WAIT-ING FOR YOU IN THE LOUNGE.

MRS. PALMER, YOUR GUEST IS HERE.

LET HER IN.

8

* READ VOLUME 12.

GOOD DAY!

HELLO, AMBER. PLEASE TAKE A SEAT NEXT TO ME.

IS THAT YOUR HELICOPTER?

NO, I BOR-ROWED IT FROM A FRIEND.

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE WONDERING WHY I ASKED YOU TO COME HERE.

YEAH, I MUST SAY I'M VERY CURIOUS. WE'VE NEVER MET, AND I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, SO I HAVE NO IDEA WHY YOU WOULD CALL ME.

I WANT YOU TO PROTECT MY SON.

YOUR SON? WHAT'S HIS NAME?

HARRISON BANKS. I UNDERSTAND YOU ALREADY KNOW HIM.

YOU ARE AN EXPERT IN THE USE OF FIREARMS OF EVERY CALIBER, HAVE A BLACK BELT IN KARATE, AND POSSESS FORMIDABLE HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT SKILLS. YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO KEEP HIM SAFE.

SINCE YOU ALREADY KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT ME, YOU OUGHT TO KNOW THAT I'M ALSO A CONTRACT KILLER. THAT DOESN'T FREAK YOU OUT?

IT DOESN'T. ONE, I KNOW YOU'RE DOING THIS TO RAISE YOUR LITTLE BOY AND YOU HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE. IF I WERE YOU, I WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME THING.

AND TWO, I'M GOING TO PAY YOU A LOT OF MONEY TO PROTECT MY SON. WHICH MEANS YOU WILL NO LONGER HAVE TO KILL TO SUPPORT YOUR FAMILY.

9

HARRISON WAS RECENTLY ELECTED MAYOR OF GOLDEN CITY, AS YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD. HIS LIFE IS NOW IN JEOPARDY SINCE HIS OPPONENTS WANT TO TAKE HIM OUT BY WHATEVER MEANS POSSIBLE.

YOU THINK SO?

I KNOW SO. THE POLITICAL WORLD IS EVERY BIT AS CRUEL AS THE WORLD OF FINANCE. I SHOULD KNOW, BECAUSE I WAS A MAYOR OF GOLDEN CITY IN THE PAST.

WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU WANT FROM ME?

I'M GETTING THERE. BUT FIRST, I'D LIKE YOU TO KNOW THAT I'VE CHANGED MY NAME FOR PERSONAL REASONS THAT ARE NONE OF YOUR CONCERN. SO PLEASE KEEP ANY INFORMATION ABOUT OUR MEETING TO YOURSELF.

OUR CONVERSATION AND THE JOB I'M ABOUT TO GIVE YOU ARE TO BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. YOU MUSTN'T TELL ANYONE, NOT EVEN HARRISON. HE CAN NEVER KNOW OR SUSPECT THAT I'VE ASKED YOU TO WATCH OVER HIM.

IT HAS TO REMAIN A SECRET. DO YOU AGREE?

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME. I'LL KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT.

EXCELLENT! HERE'S THE NUMBER OF AN OFFSHORE ACCOUNT OPENED IN YOUR NAME IN THE BAHAMAS. AS WELL AS THE AMOUNT THAT WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO IT EACH YEAR IF YOU AGREE TO GUARANTEE MY SON'S SAFETY.

?!

ONE... ONE MILLION DOLLARS?!

WHY DO YOU WANT ME TO PROTECT HARRISON WHEN HE'S ALREADY GOT BODYGUARDS?

THEY PROTECT HIM DURING THE DAY, NOT AT NIGHT.

10

MR. MAYOR, I HAVE SOMEONE ON THE PHONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOU. A WOMAN NAMED AMBER.

PUT HER THROUGH TO MY OFFICE.

HELLO, AMBER, HOW HAVE YOU BEEN SINCE OUR LAST MEETING?

GOOD, AND YOU? I JUST WANTED TO CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR ELECTION. YOU'RE NOW ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL FIGURES IN THE WORLD. I HOPE WE'LL GET THE CHANCE TO CATCH UP DESPITE YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE.

WE'RE CELEBRATING MY ELECTION TOMORROW NIGHT. WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME? YOU'RE INVITED!

SURE, THANKS!

♫

HELLO? OH, HI, HARRISON. HOW ARE YOU? TOMORROW NIGHT? SURE, ALRIGHT!

HARRISON HAS INVITED US TO A PARTY TOMORROW. HE SAID HE'D SEND A TAXICAB TO PICK US UP. I SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID YES, I'VE GOT NOTHING TO WEAR. I'M GOING TO LOOK RIDICULOUS IN MY OLD DRESSES IN FRONT OF THE RICH GIRLS FROM GOLDEN CITY. EVERYONE THESE LOOKS SO CLASSY.

WE'VE GOT LOADS OF MONEY IN THE BANK*, SO WHY NOT GO AND GET SOME NEW CLOTHES IN THE CITY? AND A SMARTPHONE! OKAY? SO I CAN TAKE PICTURES AT THE SHINDIG!

11

* READ VOLUME 12.

TAXI
WELCOME TO GOLDEN CITY! MR. MAYOR HAS ASKED ME TO GREET YOU.
THE SHINDIG'S ALREADY STARTED?
THE WHAT?
SHE MEANS THE PARTY.
OH YES, IT'S STARTED. MOST OF THE GUESTS ARE ALREADY HERE.
IT'S GREAT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
YOU TOO. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN YOU IN A DRESS. IT LOOKS GREAT ON YOU, VERY STUNNING.
CAN YOU BELIEVE I TRIED TO KILL YOU IN THE PAST*? DO YOU HATE ME?
NOT ANYMORE. OTHERWISE I WOULDN'T HAVE INVITED YOU.
12

* READ PREVIOUS VOLUMES.

SMILE, YOU'RE ON CAMERA!

MIFA, SOLO AND APPLE AREN'T WITH YOU?

THEY'RE STUFFING THEIR FACES AT THE BUFFET.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, BUT IT'S SO DAMN GOOD.

EVENING, BOBBY.

YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG PERSON. MY NAME'S SOLO.

MY GOD, THIS IS INCREDIBLE. YOU LOOK EXACTLY LIKE MY FRIEND BOBBY. THE TWO OF YOU COULD BE TWINS!

COME ON, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO HIM. THE RESEMBLANCE IS UNCANNY!

WE'LL TAKE THE ELEVATOR.

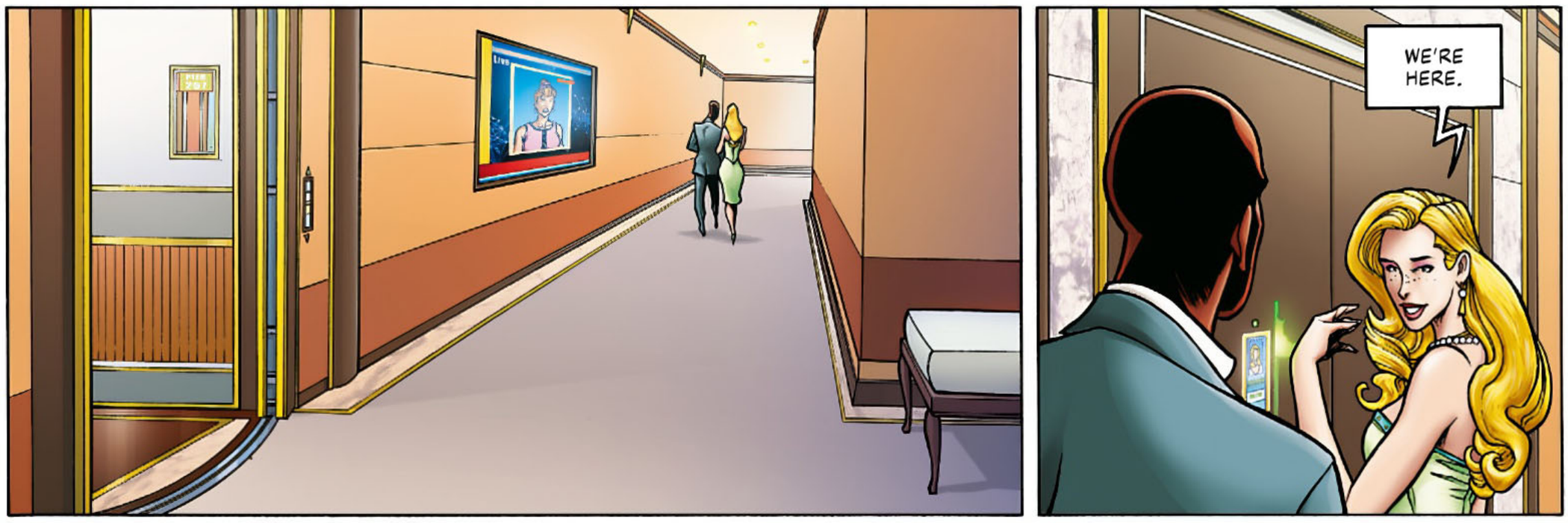
WHY? WHERE ARE WE GOING?

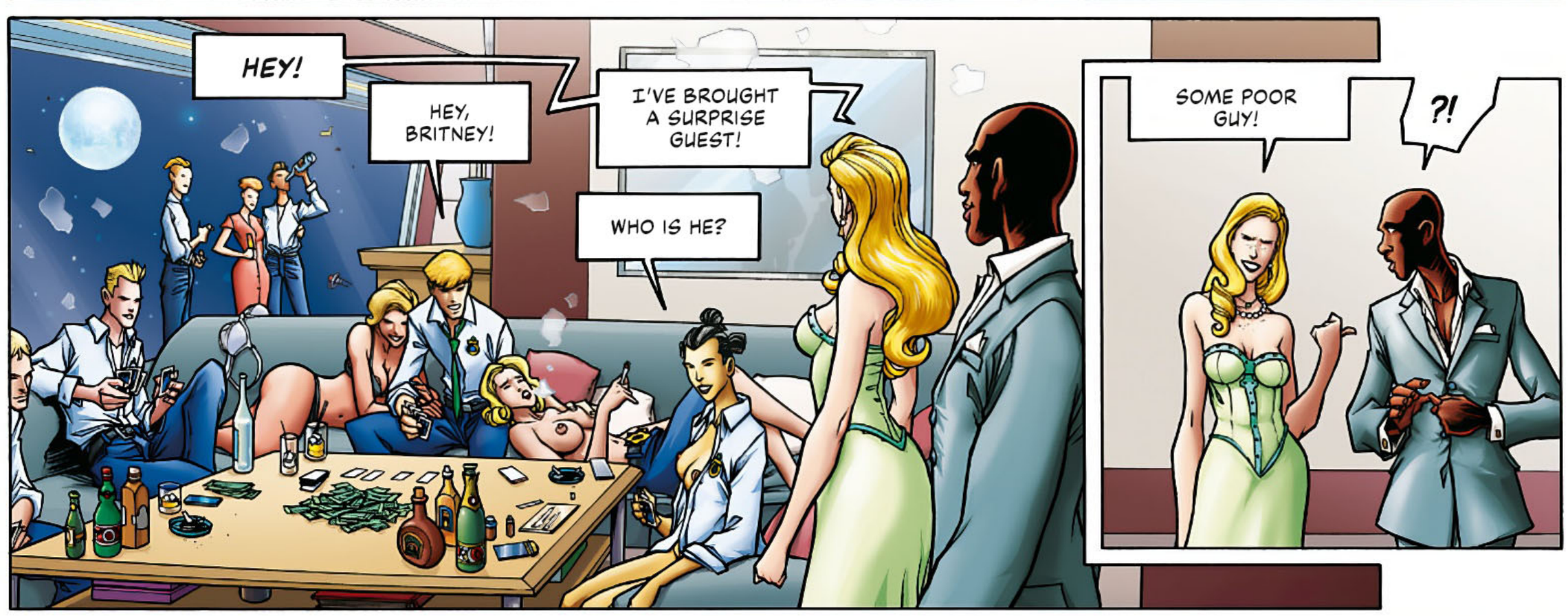
BOBBY'S PLACE. HE LIVES ON THE THIRD FLOOR.

WHY DID HE LEAVE WITH HER? WHAT DOES THAT SKANK HAVE THAT I DON'T?

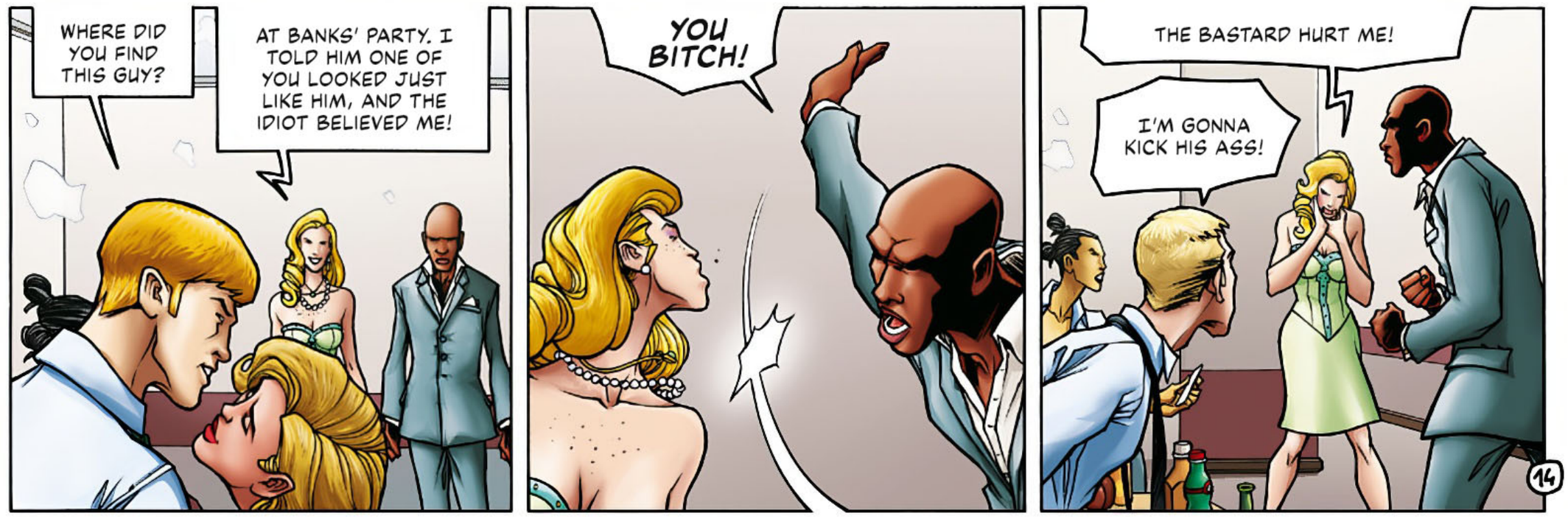
STOP BEING JEALOUS. YOU KNOW THAT SOLO AND I LOVE NO ONE BUT YOU. WE'VE NEVER CHEATED ON YOU.

13


WE'RE HERE.


HEY!
HEY, BRITNEY!
I'VE BROUGHT A SURPRISE GUEST!
WHO IS HE?
SOME POOR GUY!
?!

SO FAR WE'VE ONLY SEEN THEM IN THE MEDIA. I FIGURED YOU'D LIKE TO SEE ONE IN PERSON, IN THE FLESH. YOU CAN STEP RIGHT UP AND TAKE A CLOSER LOOK. HIS NAME IS SOLO. DON'T BE AFRAID, HE DOESN'T BITE. HA, HA!
I'M NOT POOR. I OWN A HOUSE.
YOU CALL THAT PLACE A HOUSE? FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, IT'S AN OLD RAMSHACKLE WOODEN SHACK. A HOBO'S SHED!


WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS GUY?
AT BANKS' PARTY. I TOLD HIM ONE OF YOU LOOKED JUST LIKE HIM, AND THE IDIOT BELIEVED ME!
YOU BITCH!
THE BASTARD HURT ME!
I'M GONNA KICK HIS ASS!
14

OW !

THROW HIM OUT, KARL!

I'M NOT DONE WITH HIM YET. I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM SORRY FOR HITTING YOU!

GET UP, YOU SON OF A BITCH!

DO IT, KARL, BEAT HIM ASS!

ARH!

HE NEARLY TOOK YOUR EYE OUT. THIS GUY IS DANGEROUS. WE NEED TO CALL THE POLICE!

NO! WE'LL HANDLE THIS OURSELVES!

APOLOGIZE TO BRITNEY!

AND TO KARL. YOU HEAR ME, BLACKIE?

GO FUCK YOURSELVES.

IS... IS HE DEAD?

NO, BUT WE NEED TO GET HIM TO THE ER RIGHT NOW OR HE'S GOING TO DIE!

FORGET IT. IF WE TAKE HIM TO THE HOSPITAL, HE'S GOING TO TURN US IN AND THEN WE'LL HAVE COPS ON OUR ASSES! WE MIGHT END UP IN JAIL. IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT? TO THROW YOUR WHOLE LIFE AWAY BECAUSE OF THIS GUY? I MEAN, ALL THIS IS HIS FAULT. IF HE HADN'T SLAPPED ME, NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED!

BRITNEY'S RIGHT. WE NEED TO GET RID OF HIM WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE. IS EVERY-ONE COOL WITH THAT?

YES, BUT HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET HIM OUT OF HERE WITHOUT ATTRACTING THE ATTENTION OF THE SECURITY? THE HALLWAYS ARE COVERED WITH CAMERAS!

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WE'RE GOING TO STICK HIM IN THIS FOLDABLE ROOF BOX. I USE IT TO CARRY MY STUFF WHEN I GO ON THE MAINLAND ON VACATION AND RENT A CAR.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH HIM ONCE HE'S LOCKED UP IN THERE?

THE BEST PLAN WOULD BE TO GET HIM AWAY FROM HERE.

SURE. WE'LL TAKE THE BOX DOWN TO THE PARKING GARAGE AND LOAD HIM ONTO MY SPACE SHUTTLE. THEN WE'LL FLY DOWN TO EARTH AND DUMP THE BODY SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE WHERE NOBODY CAN FIND IT.

PICK UP THE BROKEN GLASS PIECES, CLEAN UP THE MESS, AND WIPE OFF ANY BLOODSTAINS. YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THE COPS MIGHT TURN UP, SO LET'S MAKE SURE THEY DON'T FIND A SINGLE TRACE.

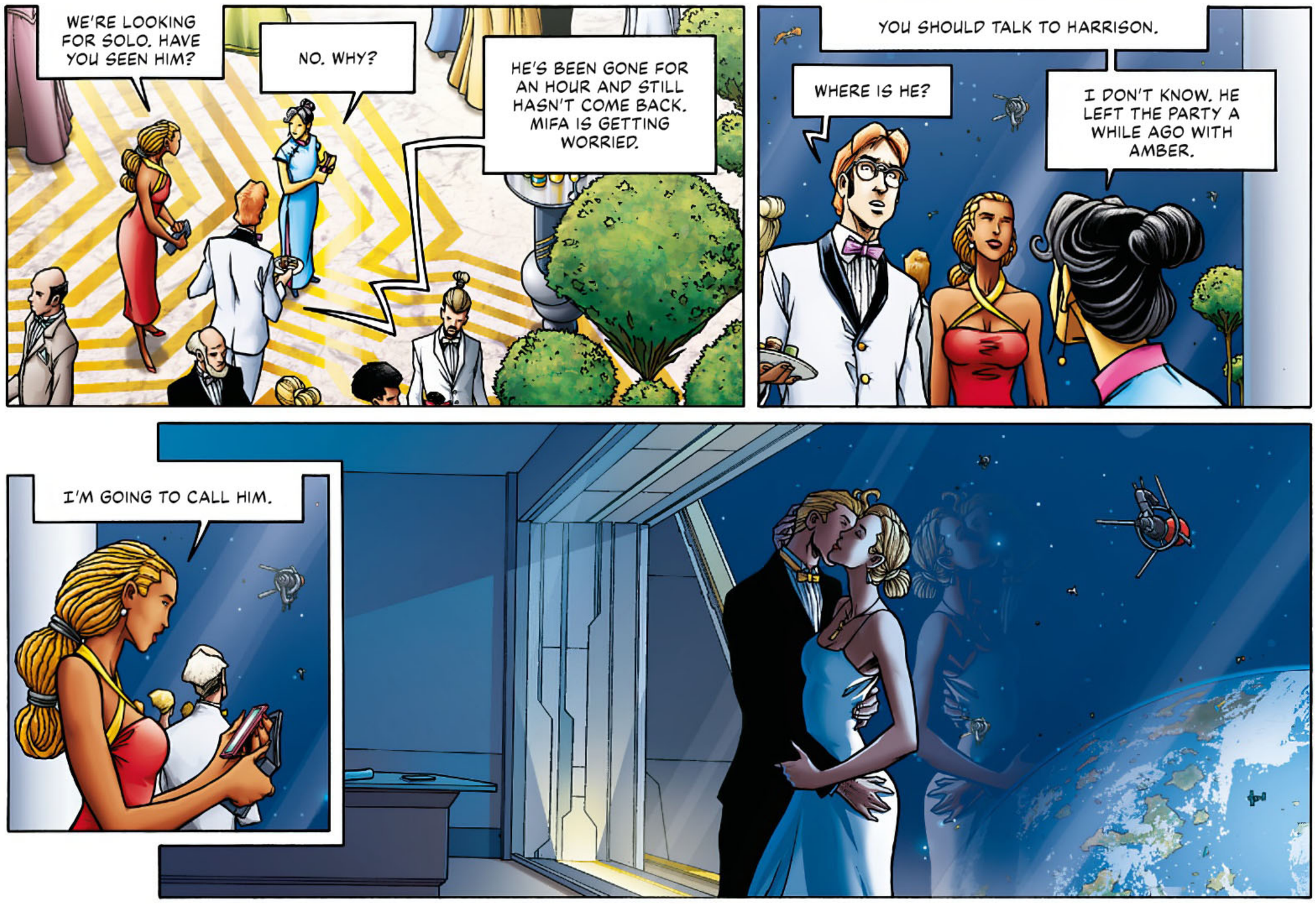
HOW DID YOU KNOW THIS GUY LIVED IN A WOODEN SHED?

MY SISTER TOLD ME. SHE WAS THE ONE WHO WELCOMED HIM UPON HIS ARRIVAL ON GOLDEN CITY.

REALLY? WHO INVITED HIM?

BANKS. IT WOULD'VE BEEN BETTER IF HE HADN'T!

17


WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOLO. HAVE YOU SEEN HIM?
NO. WHY?
HE'S BEEN GONE FOR AN HOUR AND STILL HASN'T COME BACK. MIFA IS GETTING WORRIED.
YOU SHOULD TALK TO HARRISON.
WHERE IS HE?
I DON'T KNOW. HE LEFT THE PARTY A WHILE AGO WITH AMBER.
I'M GOING TO CALL HIM.
♫♫
?!
♫♫
HE'S NOT ANSWERING.
BUMMER! HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND SOLO?
MAYBE THE COPS CAN HELP.

HEY, GUYS! THIS YOUNG LADY IS LOOKING FOR ONE OF HER FRIENDS. HIS NAME'S SOLO. HE WAS AT BANKS' PARTY AND NOW HE'S MISSING.

SINCE WHEN?

ABOUT AN HOUR AGO. HE LEFT WITH A GIRL AND DIDN'T COME BACK.

MAYBE THEY'RE JUST FOOLING AROUND SOMEWHERE!

HOW DOES THIS YOUNG LADY LOOK LIKE?

BLONDE AND WELL-DRESSED.

GOLDEN CITY IS PACKED WITH WELL-DRESSED BLONDES! CAN YOU GIVE US ANY OTHER INFORMATION?

NO. WE DIDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK AT HER.

THIS IS SOLO'S FIRST VISIT TO GOLDEN CITY, AND HE MAY HAVE GOTTEN LOST.

IN THAT CASE, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO TRACK HIM DOWN WITH THE SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS. WHAT DOES YOUR FRIEND LOOK LIKE? COULD YOU DESCRIBE HIM TO ME?

I HAVE HIS PICTURE ON MY CELL PHONE. LET ME SHOW IT TO YOU.

I'M GOING TO SEND IT TO THE CENTRAL COMPUTER AND HAVE IT RUN A SEARCH. THIS SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG, MAYBE A COUPLE OF MINUTES.

19

HELLO? OH, HI! YES, I UNDERSTAND. GOODBYE. THANKS FOR TELLING US.

♫♫

WHO WAS THAT?

GOLDEN CITY COPS.

HAVE THEY FOUND SOLO?

STILL NO LUCK. THEY SWEPT THE WHOLE CITY FOR THREE DAYS. THEY COULDN'T COME UP WITH ANYTHING. APPEALS FOR WITNESSES HAVE ALSO BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL. SOLO IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND. THEY'VE DECIDED TO CALL OFF THE SEARCH.

WE CAN'T JUST GIVE UP ON HIM! WE NEED TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO FIND HIM!

WHAT CAN WE DO?

I'M NOT SURE. MAYBE WE COULD SEND SOLO'S PHOTO TO THE PRESS AND HAVE IT PUBLISHED ALONGSIDE A WANTED POSTER.

THAT WON'T WORK. HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE GO MISSING EVERY MONTH, AND THEY'RE NEVER FOUND.

IT'S WORTH A TRY! WE MIGHT GET LUCKY!

I TOOK SEVERAL PHOTOS OF HIM AT BANKS' PARTY. WE'LL PICK ONE WHERE HE'S EASILY RECOGNIZABLE.

THAT'S THE GIRL!

WHAT GIRL?

THE BLONDE THAT LEFT WITH SOLO.

LET ME SEE!

SHE'S RIGHT THERE BEHIND SOLO, TALKING TO A GUEST.

ZOOM IN ON HER FACE TO GET A BETTER LOOK.

YEP, IT'S HER ALRIGHT. NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

SEND THIS PICTURE TO BANKS RIGHT AWAY AND TELL HIM TO FORWARD IT TO THE GOLDEN CITY COPS. THEY CAN FIND OUT WHO THIS GIRL IS.

HALF AN HOUR LATER.

♫♫

HELLO? HOLD ON, I'M GONNA PASS THE PHONE TO MIFA.

LET'S HEAR IT, HARRISON.

THE POLICE WERE QUICK TO IDENTIFY THE GIRL IN QUESTION. HER NAME'S BRITNEY PARKER. SHE LEFT GOLDEN CITY YESTERDAY TO ATTEND THE VENICE CARNIVAL WITH SOME FRIENDS. BASED ON MY INFORMATION, SHE BOOKED A SUITE AT THE HOTEL DANIELI.

WE'LL HEAD OVER THERE AND ASK HER A FEW QUESTIONS.

I CAN'T COME WITH YOU. I'VE GOT SO MUCH WORK THAT I CAN'T LEAVE THE OFFICE RIGHT NOW.

AND BECAUSE THE GOLDEN CITY POLICE IS NOT ALLOWED TO CONDUCT INVESTIGATIONS ON THE GROUND, I CAN'T GET YOU ANY HELP FROM THEM EITHER.

NO PROBLEM, WE'LL HANDLE IT. BYE, HARRISON.

IS THERE ANY MONEY LEFT IN THE BANK?

YEAH, PLENTY! WHY?

WE'LL BE CATCHING THE NEXT FLIGHT TO VENICE.

OLGA ULANOV IS HERE TO SE YOU, MR. MILLER.

SEND HER IN.

GOOD DAY, MR. MILLER.

GOOD DAY, OLGA. HAVE A SEAT.

IS YOUR INVESTIGA-TION OVER?

YES, AS I TOLD YOU DURING OUR RECENT DISCUS-SION ON THE PHONE, I UNCOVERED A SCANDALOUS STORY IN MOSCOW CONCERNING THE BANKS GROUP.

CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC?

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW IS ON THIS MEMORY STICK. I SPOKE TO SEVERAL EMPLOYEES OF A RUSSIAN SUBSIDI-ARY OF THE BANKS GROUP. I HAD TO PAY THEM A LOT OF MONEY AND SOMETIMES USE HIDDEN CAMERAS TO GET THEM TO TALK.

SOME DECLINED TO PRO-VIDE EVIDENCE BECAUSE THEY FEARED REPRISALS.

THE FIRST WITNESS I INTERVIEWED, AS YOU WILL SEE IN MY REPORT, WAS AN AMBULANCE DRIVER. HE TOOK ME TO THE MAXIMOV HOSPITAL MORGUE.

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HI! I'M HERE FOR THE PACKAGE.

WHO'S SHE?

MY CO-WORKER. SHE GOT THE OK TO WORK WITH US. RELAX, SHE'S TRUSTWORTHY. I CAN VOUCH FOR HER.

BRING HER BACK HERE BY THE END OF THE WEEK. HER FUNERAL IS SCHEDULED FOR NEXT SATURDAY.

OK.

719

СКОРАЯ МЕДИЦИНСКАЯ ПОМОЩЬ

WHY DID YOU TELL THE MORGUE DOCTOR THAT I WAS ONE OF YOUR CO-WORKERS?

IF I'D TOLD HIM YOU WERE A JOURNALIST, HE WOULD BECOME VERY SUSPICIOUS AND REFUSE TO HAND OVER THE CORPSE I'D COME TO COLLECT.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU COME TO COLLECT?

SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK. WE MOVE THEM OUT OF THE MORGUE WITHOUT ASKING FOR PERMISSION FROM THEIR FAMILIES. IT'S ILLEGAL.

WHERE DO YOU TAKE THEM?

TO A LABORATORY RUN BY A BANKS GROUP SUBSIDIARY.

HEY, YURI! IT'S PRETTY CHILLY, HUH?

IF I DIDN'T HAVE A HEATER IN MY BOOTH, I'D FREEZE MY BALLS OFF!

THEY WON'T LET YOU IN. THE LAB IS OFF-LIMITS TO ANYONE OUTSIDE THE DEPARTMENT.

COULD YOU CAPTURE FOOTAGE WITH A HIDDEN CAMERA?

HOW AM I GOING TO DO THAT?

WITH THIS WATCH. THERE'S A TINY CAMERA CONCEALED INSIDE. WEAR IT ON YOUR WRIST.

OK!

WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE IS FOOTAGE THE PARAMEDIC CAPTURED ON A HIDDEN CAMERA. JUST SO YOU KNOW, IT'S PRETTY GRUESOME!

HAND ME A ROD.

25

THIS IS HORRIBLE! WHY ARE THEY REMOVING BONES FROM THAT BODY?!

TO SUPPLY THE MARKET. THIS LAB IS INVOLVED IN ILLEGAL HARVESTING OF HUMAN BONE AND TISSUE, WHICH IS THEN SHIPPED TO EUROPE, AND EVEN TO THE USA VIA GERMANY.

AMERICANS MAKE IMPLANTS OUT OF THESE BODY PARTS. ONE EXAMPLE IS ACHILLES TENDONS FROM DEAD PEOPLES' TENDONS. IN THE UNITED STATES, FIVE MILLION TISSUE TRANSPLANTS ARE PERFORMED EACH YEAR.

THE DEMAND FAR EXCEEDS THE SUPPLY OF AVAILABLE TISSUE. THIS IS WHY PRICES ARE SOARING, AND PEOPLE WOULD GO TO ANY LENGTH TO GET THEIR HANDS ON ONE. IF A SINGLE CORPSE IS PUT ON THE MARKET AND QUICKLY EXPLOITED, IT CAN BE WORTH UP TO 350,000 DOLLARS.

ON A GLOBAL SCALE, HUMAN TISSUE TRAFFICKING IS A MULTIBILLION-DOLLAR BUSINESS. RUSSIAN MEDICAL EXAMINERS ARE LOOKING TO GET IN ON THE ACTION. THAT'S WHY THIS SUBSIDIARY OF THE BANKS GROUP IS ABLE TO OBTAIN ITS RAW MATERIALS FROM MOSCOW MORGUES WITHOUT ANY WORRIES.

AFTER THE TISSUE HAS BEEN EXTRACTED, PLASTIC RODS ARE INSERTED INTO THE CORPSE TO STIFFEN IT BEFORE THE FUNERAL.

OLGA, CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR EXCELLENT REPORT! MAKE IT A PRIME-TIME BROADCAST ON THE GOLDEN CITY CHANNEL. THE PEOPLE OF OUR CITY WON'T FORGIVE BANKS FOR CHOPPING UP THE DEAD. HIS POPULARITY WILL GO DOWNHILL!

THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR! BUT, EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, NO ONE CAN KNOW THAT I'M THE ONE WHO ASKED YOU TO DO THIS INVESTIGATION. IS THAT CLEAR?

YES.

HERE IS THE AMOUNT WE AGREED ON. IN SMALL BILLS, AS YOU REQUESTED.

THANK YOU, MR. MILLER.

26

VENICE.

GOOD DAY! I'M A FRIEND OF BRITNEY PARKER. SHE INVITED ME TO COME UP TO HER ROOM. WHAT FLOOR IS SHE ON?

LET ME HAVE A LOOK ON THE COMPUTER.

THIRD FLOOR. ROOM 324.

THANKS!

TOC! TOC!

324

I'VE BROUGHT YOUR CARNIVAL DRESS, MISS PARKER.

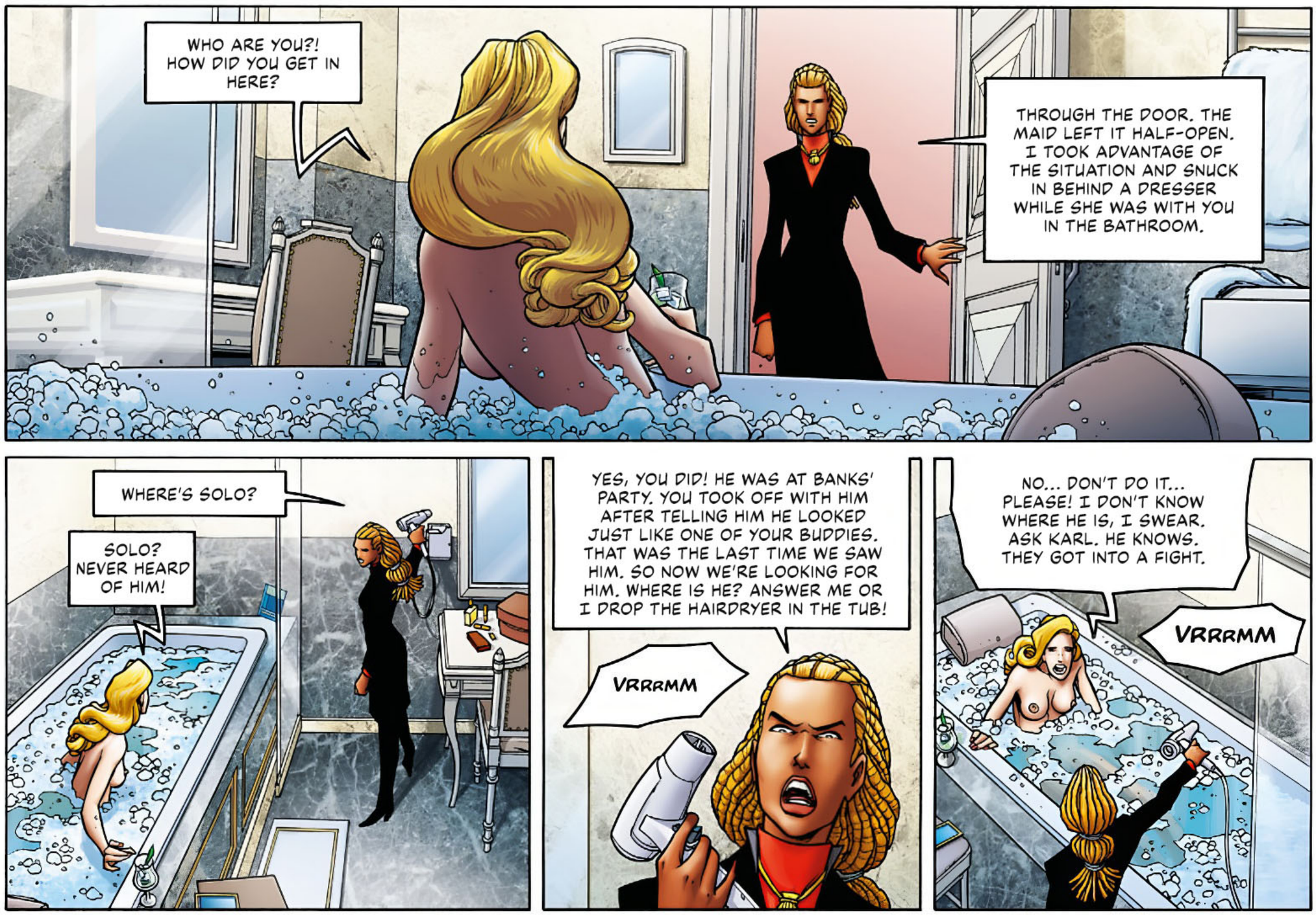
LET ME SEE IT. I'M IN THE BATHROOM.

GREAT! LEAVE IT ON MY BED.

HI, BRITNEY!

?!

28


WHO ARE YOU?! HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
THROUGH THE DOOR. THE MAID LEFT IT HALF-OPEN. I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION AND SNUCK IN BEHIND A DRESSER WHILE SHE WAS WITH YOU IN THE BATHROOM.
WHERE'S SOLO?
SOLO? NEVER HEARD OF HIM!
YES, YOU DID! HE WAS AT BANKS' PARTY. YOU TOOK OFF WITH HIM AFTER TELLING HIM HE LOOKED JUST LIKE ONE OF YOUR BUDDIES. THAT WAS THE LAST TIME WE SAW HIM. SO NOW WE'RE LOOKING FOR HIM. WHERE IS HE? ANSWER ME OR I DROP THE HAIRDRYER IN THE TUB!
VRRRMM
NO... DON'T DO IT... PLEASE! I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS, I SWEAR. ASK KARL. HE KNOWS. THEY GOT INTO A FIGHT.
VRRRMM
WHO'S KARL?
A FRIEND OF MINE.
VRRRMM
WHAT DOES HE LOOK LIKE? DO YOU HAVE HIS PHOTO?
YES. ON MY SMARTPHONE.
VRRRMM
SHOW ME.
VRRRMM
HE'S IN VENICE?
YES.
VRRRMM
29

BRITNEY STILL ISN'T HERE?

NO. BUT SHE SHOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE NOW.

THERE SHE IS!

HOW DID YOU RECOGNIZE HER?!

HER COSTUME. I WAS THERE WHEN SHE PICKED IT.

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, KARL.

WHY?

I GOT SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU. COME!

YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME YOU LOVE ME, AREN'T YOU?

LOOK, THIS IS NO TIME FOR JOKES. ONE OF SOLO'S FRIENDS DROPPED BY MY HOTEL ROOM EARLIER TODAY. SHE'S LOOKING FOR HIM.

DON'T WORRY, SHE WON'T FIND HIM! WE DUMPED HIS BODY IN THE OCEAN OFF THE COAST OF HAWAII! THERE ARE A LOT OF SHARKS OUT THERE, SO HE'S DEFINITELY FISH FOOD BY NOW.

BRITNEY! WHERE ARE YOU GOING? COME BACK!

WHY IS SHE LEAVING?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

DID YOU TWO GET INTO A FIGHT?

NO.

WEIRD. SHE WAS SO EXCITED ABOUT GOING TO THE CARNIVAL! GIVE HER A CALL ON HER SMARTPHONE. MAYBE SOMETHING'S WRONG.

30

THERE'S NO ANSWER. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY SHE JUST LEFT WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING.

SOLO IS DEAD.

WHO TOLD YOU THAT?

KARL. HE THOUGHT I WAS BRITNEY, SO HE DIDN'T PAY ANY ATTENTION. HE SAID HE'D DUMPED SOLO'S BODY INTO THE SEA.

TAKE OFF THE GAG!

CLAC !

HOW DID SOLO DIE? WHAT HAPPENED?

ANSWER ME!

MR. MAYOR, OLGA ULANOV'S REPORT WE'VE JUST SEEN PUTS YOU DIRECTLY ON THE SPOT.

AS THE CEO OF BANKS GROUP, YOU ARE OBVIOUSLY AWARE OF THIS HEINOUS TRAFFICKING SCANDAL.

THERE IS NO TRAFFICKING. OUR RUSSIAN SUBSIDIARY IS SAVING MANY LIVES BY PROVIDING DOCTORS WITH THE MEANS TO PERFORM BONE AND TISSUE TRANSPLANTS.

SURE, BUT YOUR STAFF IS COLLECTING THESE TISSUES AND BONES WITHOUT OBTAINING CONSENT FROM THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS! THIS IS AGAINST THE LAW AND PUNISHABLE BY SEVERE PRISON SENTENCE!

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AGAINST THE PRACTICE OF NOT INFORMING FAMILIES BEFOREHAND. IN FACT, IF THEY GIVE THEIR CONSENT, THEY RECEIVE FINANCIAL COMPENSATION.

I'M INFORMED BY THE MAIN ROOM THAT DAVID MILLER, THE FORMER MAYOR OF GOLDEN CITY, IS CURRENTLY ON THE LINE. HE WANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS DEBATE.

THE FLOOR IS YOURS, MR. MILLER.

I HAVE ONE QUESTION. IF HARRISON BANKS IS UNABLE OF KEEPING AN EYE ON HIS OWN GROUP AND IS UNAWARE OF WHAT IS HAPPENING WITHIN, IS HE REALLY FIT TO LEAD GOLDEN CITY?

HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THAT, MR. BANKS?

AS MANY OF YOU ARE AWARE, I HAVE BEEN IN AFRICA FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS. MY SCHEDULE HAS BEEN VERY BUSY SINCE MY RETURN. THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS TAKEN UP A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF MY TIME.

HOWEVER, I WILL BE GOING TO MOSCOW TOMORROW TO RESTRUCTURE OUR RUSSIAN SUBSIDIARY AND TAKE THE REQUIRED ACTIONS TO ENSURE THAT EVERYTHING GOES AS PLANNED MOVING FORWARD.

32

MOSCOW AIRPORT, THE NEXT DAY.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO, MR. BANKS?

OUR SUBSIDIARY'S HEAD OFFICE.

WIIIIIIIIIIII

WIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII

A WITNESS INFORMED US ABOUT THE ACCIDENT. WHAT HAPPENED?

THIS PERSON SHOT AT US. I DON'T KNOW WHY.

WAS HE ALONE?

NO. THE OTHER ONE GOT AWAY.

WE'RE TAKING YOU TO THE POLICE STATION SO WE CAN TAKE YOUR STATEMENT.

ЛИЦИЯ

LET'S GO OVER THIS AGAIN, MR. BANKS. SOMEONE FIRED SEVERAL ROUNDS AT YOUR CAR WHILE YOU WERE DRIVING THROUGH DOWNTOWN, NOT TOO LONG AFTER YOU GOT OFF THE AIRPLANE, CORRECT?

YES. MY DRIVER AND BODYGUARD WERE KILLED.

I TOOK A PHOTO OF THE SHOOTER.

LET ME SEE.

DID YOU KILL HIM?

YES.

HIS NAME IS IGOR BARANOV. OUR DEPARTMENT KNOWS HIM VERY WELL. HE WAS ALREADY CONVICTED FOR NUMEROUS CRIMES.

34

PLEASE HAND OVER YOUR WEAPON. YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.

ME?! WHY?!

FOR MURDER.

IT WAS SELF-DEFENSE!

YOU'LL HAVE TO EXPLAIN THAT TO THE INVESTIGATING JUDGE. HE HAS THE LAST SAY OVER WHETHER OR NOT TO LET YOU WALK FREE. ALL I'M DOING IS UPHOLDING THE LAW.

WHAT IS YOUR REASON FOR COMING TO MOSCOW, MR. BANKS? SIGHTSEEING?

NO, I'M HERE ON BUSINESS. I'M GOING TO REORGANIZE THE RUSSIAN SUBSIDIARY OF MY GROUP.

IF I WERE YOU, I'D FORGET ABOUT THIS REORGANIZATION AND LEAVE RUSSIA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

BARANOV BELONGS TO THE MOB. IF HE MADE AN ATTEMPT ON YOUR LIFE, IT WAS ON ORDERS FROM THE BOSSES OF THE ORGANIZED CRIMINAL SYNDICATE. THESE PEOPLE DON'T MESS AROUND.

THOUGH THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE SUCCEEDED THIS TIME, TRUST ME WHEN I SAY THEY WON'T GIVE UP. THEY WILL SEND MORE HITMEN AFTER YOU UNTIL THE JOB IS DONE.

YOU'RE RIGHT, IT'S SAFER TO HEAD BACK TO GOLDEN CITY STRAIGHT AWAY. CAN YOU PLEASE CALL ME A CAB?

OF COURSE! THERE'S A STATION NEARBY.

35

GRAB YOUR GUN! WE NEED TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

TO THE AIRPORT. YOU'RE TAKING THE NEXT FLIGHT TO GOLDEN CITY. BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T, YOU MIGHT GET KILLED BY THE MOB. I'M STAYING HERE TO LOOK INTO THE TRAFFICKING OF HUMAN TISSUE AND BONES.

IF YOU'RE STAYING, I'M STAYING!

HAVE IT YOUR WAY. BUT IT'S NOT GOING TO BE A WALK IN THE PARK. WE'RE GOING TO HAVE THE COPS AND THE MAFIA BREATHING DOWN OUR NECKS!

?!

?!

GOOD... DAY, MR. BANKS! THIS... THIS IS A SURPRISE. NOBODY TOLD ME YOU WERE COMING.

THAT'S BECAUSE I DIDN'T TELL ANYONE.

DO YOU HAVE A WRITTEN CONSENT FROM THIS CHILD'S PARENTS?

UM, YEAH, IT'S IN MY JACKET.

I'D LIKE TO SEE IT.

STRANGE, I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND IT... I PROBABLY LEFT IT BACK HOME. I WAS SO SURE I'D PUT IT IN THIS POCKET...

I HATE IT WHEN PEOPLE TRY PLAY ME FOR A FOOL! YOU DON'T HAVE CONSENT BECAUSE YOU ARE OPERATING ILLEGALLY!! I'VE GOT THE EVIDENCE! I WANT TO KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THIS WHOLE THING, NOW!

I DON'T KNOW, I SWEAR.

YOU JUST POCKET THE CASH AND DON'T ASK ANY QUESTIONS, HUH?

YES. AFTER DELIVERING THE BODIES, THE PARAMEDIC PICKS UP THE BONES AND HUMAN TISSUE AND TAKES THEM SOMEWHERE ELSE.

WHERE?

TO A COLD STORAGE WAREHOUSE, THIRTY KILOMETERS FROM HERE.

YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE US THERE. AN AMBULANCE WILL BE LESS CONSPICUOUS THAN A POLICE CAR.

37

LATER.

281

ПОМОЩЬ

СКО

МОСКВА

GET OUT OF THE AMBULANCE!

ПОЛИЦИЯ

СКОРАЯ МЕДИЦИНСКАЯ ПОМОЩЬ

281

HANDS UP!

TAKE HER GUN!

GET IN!

38

WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?

INTO THE WOODS.

HI IGOR! I'M HERE TO SEE YAKUNIN.

OK!

WHERE'S YAKUNIN?

IN THE LOUNGE.

MR. BANKS, PLEASE COME IN AND HAVE A SEAT! I'VE REQUESTED YOUR PRESENCE HERE SO WE CAN HAVE A NICE FRIENDLY CHAT.

39

THE DOCTOR WHO CUTS UP THE CORPSES IN YOUR SUBSIDIARY INFORMED ME THAT YOU WERE ON YOUR WAY TO THE WAREHOUSE. SO I PHONED A FRIEND OF MINE TO HAVE THE POLICE INTERCEPT YOU ON THE ROAD.

I KNEW THAT SCUMBAG WAS GOING TO SNITCH ON US. I SHOULD'VE KILLED HIM.

LIKE YOU KILLED BARANOV?

YES, HE DID MISS YOU, BUT IT WAS ON PURPOSE. I GAVE HIM THE ORDER TO KILL YOUR BODYGUARD AND DRIVER AS A WARNING, BUT TO LEAVE YOU ALIVE.

MAKING MONEY IS WHAT YOU AND I ARE BOTH AIMING FOR. SO, WHY ARE WE FIGHTING? YOUR SUBSIDIARY NEEDS BODIES, AND I CAN PROVIDE THEM FOR A SMALL FEE. THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT. IT'S JUST BUSINESS.

ILLEGAL BUSINESS! AFTER ALL, YOUR MEN HAVE NO PROBLEM BREAKING INTO MORGUES!

IT'S THE ONLY WAY WE CAN SUPPLY THE MARKET. THE DEMAND IS STRONG AND CONSTANTLY RISING. REST ASSURED, IF YOU AGREE TO WORK WITH ME, YOU'LL NEVER FACE LEGAL ACTION IN MY COUNTRY. I HAVE VERY GOOD FRIENDS IN THE KREMLIN.

AND IF I REFUSE?

THINK OF YOUR MOTHER. MY SOURCES TELL ME SHE'S LIVING THE GOOD LIFE ON A LUXURY YACHT. BUT SHE'S OLD, VERY OLD. ACCIDENTS HAPPEN TO PEOPLE HER AGE.

YOU SON OF A BITCH!

TAKE HIM TO THE MOSCOW PALACE OF JUSTICE! I'LL CALL JUDGE KOVALEVSKY AND HAVE HIM TRANSFERRED TO THE LABYTNANGI PENITENTIARY WITH THE NEXT TRAIN. IT'S THE WORST PRISON IN RUSSIA. HE'LL HAVE PLENTY OF TIME THERE TO RECONSIDER MY OFFER!

WHAT ABOUT HER?

LOCK HER UP IN THE BASEMENT.

40

HAWAII.

DO WE KEEP GOING?

NO, THERE'S NO NEED. THIS IS FINE.

GOODBYE, SOLO.

WHY DID YOU THROW THE BOUQUET INTO THE SEA?

BECAUSE OUR BROTHER DROWNED A FEW DAYS AGO. WE AREN'T SURE WHERE EXACTLY.

MAYBE IT'S THE DEAD GUY WE FOUND ON THE BEACH.

WHEN?!

ON THE MORNING OF THE STORM. THE FIRE DEPARTMENT CAME TO PICK HIM UP.

WHERE DID THEY TAKE HIM?

I DON'T KNOW.

LET'S GO ASK THE COPS. MAYBE THEY CAN TELL US MORE.

HE WAS CREMATED BECAUSE NO ONE CAME FORWARD TO CLAIM HIS BODY. HOWEVER, THE URN IS STILL KEPT AT THE CREMATORIUM. YOU CAN GO PICK IT UP. I'LL CALL THEM AND ASK TO HAND IT OVER TO YOU.

THANK YOU.

41

SIBERIA, LABYTNANGI, MINUS 40° CELSIUS.

ЛАБЫТНАНГИ

ALL PASSENGERS ARE REQUESTED TO STAY ON THE TRAIN UNTIL THE PRISONERS HAVE LEFT THE STATION. THANK YOU.

СТОЙ, ОПАСНО ДЛЯ ЖИЗНИ

EMPTY YOUR POCKETS AND TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES! YOU WILL BE ISSUED WITH REGULATION UNIFORMS. AS OF THIS MOMENT, YOU'RE CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD. VISITS AND TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS ARE BANNED IN THE PENITENTIARY!

WHICH ONE OF YOU IS BANKS?

ME.

I'VE BEEN TOLD BY THE DIRECTOR TO PUT YOU ON A DISCIPLINARY PROGRAM. YOU'RE IN FOR A WORLD OF HURT!

ONE WEEK LATER.

I JUST GOT A CALL FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE LABYTNANGI PENITENTIARY. HE HAS PUT BANKS ON DISCIPLINARY PROGRAM, AS PER MY REQUEST.

AND WHAT EXACTLY IS THE DISCIPLINARY PROGRAM?

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN PITCH DARK, GETTING UP AT FOUR IN THE MORNING WITH NIGHTSTICKS, HARD LABOR UNTIL NIGHTFALL, TORTURE, AND SO ON.

ANY INMATE WOULD SNAP AFTER A FEW DAYS. NOT BANKS. HE'S TOUGHER THAN I THOUGHT. BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN HE'S WON. I HAVE AN ACE UP MY SLEEVE.

WHAT?

THE GIRL. GO DOWN AND TAKE CARE OF HER.

GET UP!

WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO SET ME FREE? I'VE BEEN LOCKED UP IN HERE FOR EIGHT DAYS WITHOUT ANY FOOD!

I TOLD YOU TO GET UP!

GET UNDRESSED!

WHY?

DO AS YOU'RE TOLD!

ARH!

MOVE IT! GET THOSE STONES OVER TO THE BUILDING SITE! THE JOB NEEDS TO BE DONE BEFORE NIGHTFALL!

I TOLD YOU THAT YOU WERE IN FOR A WORLD OF HURT! AND IT WON'T STOP UNTIL THE DIRECTOR TELLS ME TO STOP!

HE ASKED ME TO SHOW YOU A FEW PHOTOS HE GOT FROM YAKUNIN. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR GIRL?

SHE LOOKS PRETTY AWFUL, DON'T YOU THINK? YAKUNIN'S BODYGUARD BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF HER!

HE JUST KEPT GOING AT IT! I THINK HE EVEN RAPED HER, IT'S HIS HABIT!

AND HE'LL KEEP DOING IT UNTIL YOU ACCEPT YAKUNIN'S OFFER!

WHAT'S THE POINT IN BEING SO STUBBORN? YOU'RE ALREADY AT THE END OF THE LINE! SO IS YOUR LADY FRIEND! THE BODY-GUARD'S GOING TO KILL HER ANYWAY!

TELL THAT BASTARD YAKUNIN TO STOP TORTURING AMBER. I ACCEPT HIS OFFER.

WHERE ARE WE GOING TO PUT THE URN?

WE SHOULD PLACE IT ON YOUR MOM'S GRAVE, SO SOLO WON'T BE ALL ALONE. IS THAT OKAY?

YES.

LIFE'S A FUNNY THING.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

BECAUSE IT WAS HERE, IN THIS CEMETERY, THAT I FIRST MET SOLO. WE WERE TEN YEARS OLD. HE WAS SCAVENGING CANDLES FROM THE GRAVES IN ORDER TO SELL THEM. THAT BARELY GOT HIM ENOUGH TO EAT EVERY OTHER DAY.

YOU DIRTY THIEF!

?!

WHAT THE HELL?! YOU ALMOST KILLED ME! WHY ARE YOU THROWING ROCKS AT ME?

BECAUSE YOU'RE STEALING FROM THE DEAD! YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED! THIS ISN'T RIGHT!

NO ONE'S EVER COMPLAINED YET!

IF I HADN'T ACCEPTED YAKUNIN'S OFFER, WE'D BOTH BE DEAD. YOU AT THE HANDS OF HIS BODYGUARD...

AND ME IN PRISON. BUT I'M NOT GOING DOWN THAT EASY.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

COME IN, I'LL SHOW YOU.

ARE YOU CERTAIN THIS IS YAKUNIN'S CAR?

YES. I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING IT EVER SINCE HE LEFT HIS HOUSE. HE'S GOT HIS BODYGUARD WITH HIM. THEY'RE SITTING IN THE BACK OF THE CAR. I WAS ABLE TO HACK INTO THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE THAT DRIVES IT. IT'S FULLY AUTOMATED.

I CAN NOW STEER THE CAR FROM MY SEAT ANYWHERE YOU LIKE. I'M WAITING FOR YOUR ORDERS.

?!

?!

AAAAAHHHHH

PECQUEUR
&
MALFIN
SCHELLE